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TWELVE LITTLE USED PLANTS
WITH SPECIAL LANDSCAPE QUALIFICATIONS

Every botanical garden and arboretum has in its collections certain plant favorites, which on the basis of appearance, landscape potentiality, adaptability and performance have proved themselves especially worthy of recognition and use.

Just such plants are those selected for mention at this time, twelve trees, shrubs, evergreens and ground covers of established reliability, all desirable ornamentals and each with a special contribution to make toward beautifying the landscape. It may be surprising to many to note that only a few of the dozen can be classed as exotics, a majority being plants not infrequently encountered in the catalogs of the larger growers. Even three natives are included, further confirming the theory that regardless of their latent possibilities even the most familiar plant materials are often times unintentionally ignored.

Trees

A tree with a difference. So may we refer to the European Alder, *Alnus glutinosa,* an introduced species of singular picturesqueness which has naturalized itself all along the DuPage River, supposedly from an imported tree planted upstream many years ago. From a straight central trunk or group of several trunks, for the tree is often multiple stemmed, the branches extend outward at irregular angles to form an ovoid or pyramidal head of variable width and up to 30 or 40 feet in height. To see the European Alder at its best watch for it in late winter or early spring, for it is then that the conspicuous catkins of indescribable ruddy hue begin to assume prominence. Eventually elongating to 3 or 4 inches they bedeck every branch with a pendent fringe of greenish yellow. Alder foliage is also noteworthy, being dark toned and deeply veined. Its rich greenness persists without change until late fall. The natural affinity of all members of the genus for moisture makes them ideal subjects for waterside planting, although for the most part they adapt themselves very well to dryer situations. The European Alder has proved to be an

excellent companion plant for the golden stemmed weeping willows, whose colorful branches afford such a handsome setting for the former's catkin display.

The warm brown winter color note introduced into the landscape by the persistent leaves of the Shingle Oak, *Quercus imbricaria,* calls attention to a native species unfamiliar to most people. A foliage nonconformist, with 4 to 6 inch narrowly oblong, unlobed leaves resembling laurel, it is quite understandable how its "unoaklike" appearance could belie its generic relationship. Further deviating from the usual pattern, its leaves are displayed in a seemingly tufted arrangement at the ends of the branches, where their high lustre and leathery consistency remain pleasing the summer through. Autumn brings about a noteworthy color change to reddish bronze lasting until the advent of hard freezes. Immature Shingle Oaks, straight trunked, sweeping branched specimens, show a prominent pyramidal symmetry uncommon among deciduous trees, but age results in a gradual broadening into a more conventional open headed crown. Obviously a tree with such prolonged foliage interest is a natural for screening purposes, and this the Shingle Oak will do efficiently and with distinction. It has also proved a commendable hedge plant for tall hedges. Fifty feet may be considered its usual maximum height locally.

The Euonymus clan, usually thought of as a genus made up of shrubs, vines and ground covers, includes among its members several forms of semi-arborescent character which actually belong in the small tree category. One such species is 10 foot *Euonymus yedoensis,* the Yeddo Euonymus, sturdy branched, flat topped tree from Korea and Japan with coarse textured leathery foliage and extremely showy rose pink fruit. Of good size and copiously produced, the colorful capsules unquestionably rate as the major attraction, which remains effective till late fall when the purplish red leaves take over the interest. Where a small fruiting tree is needed for terrace or patio or for specimen use elsewhere the Yeddo Euonymus may be the answer. Underplanting with an evergreen ground cover will double its effectiveness.

Shrubs

The beauty of line evident in the picturesque spiny branch structure of the Maximowicz Peashrub, *Caragana Maximowicziana,* a native of West China and Thibet, is in itself sufficient reason for the shrub's recommendation as a landscape subject. Add the attraction of the inch long yellow pea-like flowers making their appearance in May, however, and the distinctiveness of the fine textured bright green compound foliage, and the shrub's landscape potential is increased immeasurably. Slow growing and remaining well under five feet, it is unlikely to get out of bounds, though space permitting it may sometimes assume a width twice its height. Having all the attributes of a good specimen, it should be planted alone where its pleasing deliniation may be appreciated to the fullest.

A low growing evergreen Euonymus (to 3 ft.) intermediate in stature between the ground cover types and the shrubby forms is the

The Shingle Oak, *Quercus imbricaria* (Michx.), foliage non-conformist of the native species.

so-called Glossy Wintercreeper, *E. Fortunei Carrierei,* an indispensable semi-shrubby variety which in colder regions can serve as a creditable substitute for some of the more tempermental *Ericaceae.* Thin, unusually glossy foliage two or three inches in length constitutes its chief attraction although it bears clusters of bittersweet-like berries as well. Showing little preference as regards sun or shade, it does hold its foliage better on north exposures, where less evidence of purplish winter tinting is apt to show up on the lower leaf surfaces. Whether used en masse or planted alone it is an ideal companion for either needle leaved evergreens or deciduous materials, adding the broad-leaved effect so lacking in our landscapes. Ordinarily developing rigid upright branches of shrubby nature, it will, if support is at hand, assume a vine form.

Anyone who has need for a tall (to 12 ft.) spreading shrub of silvery foliage cast for summer screening purposes or background planting will benefit from knowing the Autumn Elaeagnus, *Elaeagnus umbellata,* Asiatic relative of the Russian Olive. Shorter and broader of leaf than the latter and less conspicuous in coloring, it blends well in almost any grouping. Foliage alone is not its only claim to distinction, however, the slender tubed creamy white flowers so inconspicuously produced in late May or early June providing a supplementary attraction. It is their fragrance which is noteworthy, a delightful scent noticeable over a large area. There is further interest in autumn, too, in the form of silvery speckled Chinese red fruits which bedeck the branches in abundant clusters. Their subtle beauty is most effective at close range. Culturally, a light soil and sunny exposure are recommended.

Although introduced from Siberia in 1783, *Securinega suffruticosa,* (*Euphorbiaceae* Family) an uncommon shrubby Asiatic Spurge without a common name has remained in comparative obscurity ever since, known by few and absent from catalog listings. A most unfortunate circumstance, too, considering the gracefulness of its fountain-like foliage mass, the refreshing green of its small rounded leaves and twigs and its ability to thrive in part shade. The foliage color changes to clear yellow in autumn about the time the greenish fruiting capsules the size of peppercorns are ripening. In a noisily explosive action the seed is scattered far and wide, ultimately resulting in a whole host of progeny springing up around the parent plant. Whether or not this is desirable depends upon where and how the shrub is being used. Mature *Securinega* specimens may reach a height of 8 or 10 feet forming a cascade of foliage extending all the way to the ground line.

Evergreens

When occasion calls for a procumbent ground cover green the year round and almost low enough to permit a lawn mower to be operated over it, the Bar Harbor Juniper, *Juniperus horizontalis* "Bar Harbor" is a variety to consider. That is, if a source can be located, for it is still a difficult item to obtain. Being native of the Maine coast, where it spreads its dense gray green foliage masses in unrestricted abandon, it has developed a natural tolerance of low temperatures, strong winds and sun which puts it in good stead for coping with the vagaries of the mid-

western climate. Its flat scale-like foliage is very fine textured and soft to the touch, and unlike some varieties shows only the faintest suggestion of slaty winter color, unobjectionable to even the most exacting.

Another distinctive low spreading Juniper, of taller growth than the Bar Harbor but quite as desirable for landscape purposes, is *Juniperus procumbens,* the Japgarden Juniper, so named because of its popularity in Japanese gardens. This fact alone should convey some idea of its picturesqueness and suggest ways in which it can be used to best advantage. To mention a few we may cite its value as a subject for flanking garden steps, for use on sunny banks or terraces or for facing plantings of taller conifers. For a more dramatic staging try featuring a single specimen either against a rock outcropping or at the base of a group of weathered stones. Twenty inches is about the maximum height the center of the plant attains with the trailing side branches grading down to a practically procumbent stature. Sharp pointed bluish-green needles in threes provide the lively color for which the plant is noted.

Ground Covers

With the popularity of ground covers continuing undiminished the search goes on for newer or less familiar types to supplement the assortment of conventional covers generally available.

One of the most promising of the herbaceous species is the European Wild Ginger, *Asarum europaeum,* a smaller version of our native woodland undercover. Dark green and of thick leathery texture, its 3 to 5 inch kidney shaped leaves show a pronounced lustre on their upper surfaces. The odd greenish purple flowers (½"), like those of *Asarum canadense,* lie flat on the ground completely hidden by the foliage. More refined than the native Ginger and less aggressive, it is an especially choice ground cover for deep shade. A soil rich in leafmold suits it best, and it seems to matter little whether it is of acid or neutral reaction.

Those who find the purplish winter foliage coloring of the widely used Purpleleaf Wintercreeper discordant will appreciate knowing that the less familiar type species *Euonymus Fortunei radicans,* the Common Wintercreeper Euonymus, not only shows little evidence of winter coloration, (a faint purplish tinge sometimes appearing on the lower leaf surfaces) but displays a neater, more depressed habit of growth as well. Its uniformity of height is especially noteworthy and whatever the season the luxuriant green coloring of its medium textured foliage is pleasing to look at. Among easily grown ground covers for shade it has few equals, but of rabbits beware.

Roses for ground covers! Satisfactory solutions to the problem of suitable ground covers for sunny locations are often as difficult as those involving shade, and one of the best plants we know of for the purpose is the dainty Memorial Rose, *Rosa Wichuraiana.* This sprawling trailer will clothe banks, slopes or entirely flat areas with a lush mantle of glossy green, enlivened during the June blooming season with myriads of single, two inch diameter white roses. And, although flowering but once, the fine textured foliage continues to be effective throughout the entire growing season. Farther south it is semi-evergreen.

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